10: d'Orleans--354 [2] T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 292, 492, 493, 644

[LSS: During the New Year celebration in Luang Prabang.]

"Every one kneels in the dust as the monarch passes by, behind him being four bearers of parasols, two white and two green. The cortége is a lengthy one, being headed by a group of horsemen, bare legged, and with their toes resting upon the edge of very broad stirrups; their dress consisting of a small white jacket and a broad brimmed felt hat. Then comes a mandarin in a wooden palanquin, upon each side of him being a man who carries a bamboo mat to protect him from the mud which the young girls endeavour to throw at him. A troop of children who come along clapping their hands are succeeded by two broad-wheeled waggons,[sic] one of which is drawn by a horse, and the other by men, and by three elephants conveying in a howdah, made of osier to protect them from the sun, officers of a lower grade."

10: d'Orleans--374 T-3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 422, 492

"Our elephants having been brought to us at an early hour, we load them immediately and set out.

Our convoy comprises seven animals, smaller than those we had in India. Ours carry only 100 tchangs (2 1/2 cwt.). They are owned by a few families and not by the villagers in common. An animal fifteen years old is worth from six to seven tchangs, or from about 480 to 560 rupees. The one I am riding is valued at 640 rupees. The elephants require much care, which is the more readily given them as they represent a fortune for their owners. They are liable to fall ill and suffer particularly from diarrhœa. They are then treated with indogo and sugar cane.

Each elephant has two men to tend it. They take turns in driving it, in riding on its neck and in walking behind it. The man who walks behind often lops off small branches for the animal to eat. At night, one of them sleeps near the aoudah, while the other remains with the elephant. Our saddles are attached to the animals, but changed several times a night to allow them to feed on the pastures.

I am pleased to find again these good big beasts with which I passed such a pleasant month in India. Although the keepers appear to me to be kinder here, the elephants are less intelligent, or rather not so well trained; for, as elsewhere, they were captured wild. They are not very prolific in India when domesticated, but in Cambodia, on the contrary, our interpreter says, they are more so. The father of Takiate who has owned two for the last fifteen years, has had a young one which he sold to the king."

10: d'Orleans--375 T.3 (1891-92) 1894 Laos
116, 492

"The Laotian elephants seem to me inferior to their fellows of India. The leaders do barely two miles an hour over good ground. This slow, regular and almost mathematical pace, however, permits very precise operations with the compass, but otherwise is very tiresome. One ends, however, by getting used to the aoudah and by taking it for better or worse. Imagine a harness of the heaviest materials and the roughest workmanship, resting directly on the animal's back and kept in place by a palm-tree thong. In front is a strap passing across the breast,and behind a rather loose crupper made of a stick held by two cords. Upon the harness rises a small plated bamboo chest, largest at the top and covered by a sort of large straw rug. The baggage is put into this chest. For travellers it is covered with a bamboo plant, and a railing or projection behind allows one to stow away one's bag, trappings, gun, &c. The legs are crossed or they hang down in front; or more often one lies down in the shape of a Z.

In front the driver, with his feet passed through a thong in place of stirrups, drives the beast, guiding him with his legs. He rarely speaks to him, and I have never seen him use the prod which he holds in his hand. He seldom descends from his perch during the day, and in crossing a river he lets down with a string a small bamboo tube which he pulls up to drink."

23: Franck--271 T-2 (1924) 1926 Laotians
116, 276, 411, 482, 492 Ethnic subgroup

"The men, [EJ: of the 'Black Miao'] and sometimes the women, carry crude daggers in home-made sheaths; some had a long slender rifle, a few of them crossbows of a simple form, and most of them smoked or carried in their sashes pipes of sometimes elaborately tortured shapes. They use pack-oxen as well as little horses, but most of them, of both sexes, carry in a basket on their backs, though Chinese influence perhaps has led some to fasten two baskets at the ends of a short, stiff whole bamboo over a shoulder, thereby losing all the advantage of the long and supple shoulder-pole of China and Annam."

68: Mouhot--125 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 231, 489, 492

"In all this mountainous region [HD: i.e. from Korat in Siam north to Luang Prabang] elephants are the only means of transport. Every village possesses some, several as many as fifty or a hundred. Without this intelligent animal no communication would be possible during seven months of the year, while, with his assistance, there is scarcely a place to which you cannot penetrate."

68: Mouhot--126-129 N-5 (1858-61) 1864 Laotians
116, 231, 489, 492

"We must not, however, exaggerate his merits. Probably the saddles used by the Laotians are capable of great improvement; but I must admit that the load of three small oxen, that is to say, about 250 or 300 pounds, is all that I ever saw the largest elephants carry easily, and 18 miles is the longest distance they can accomplish with an ordinary load. Ten or twelve miles are the usual day's work. With four, five, or sometimes seven elephants, I travelled over all the mountain country from the borders of Laos to Louang-Prabang, a distance of nearly 500 miles.

All this eastern portion, with the exception of a few villages filled with 'black-bellied savages'--so called from the manner in which they tattoo themselves--is inhabited by the same race, the 'white-bellied Laotians,' who call themselves Laos, and are known by this name to all the Siamese, Chinese, and surrounding nations. [127-128 contain illustration] [129]

The black-bellied or western Laotians are called by their eastern brethren by the same name which, in Siam and Cambodia, is bestowed on the Annamites, Zuène, Lao-Zuène. The only thing that distinguishes them is, that they tattoo the under part of the body, principally the thighs, and frequently wear the hair long and knotted on the top of their heads. Their language is nearly the same, and differs little from the Siamese and Eastern Laos, except in the pronunciation, and in certain expressions no longer in use among the former."

bank, and himself set out together with Vacle to go down the river as far as Outene. 648* 175*

Reconnaissance in Cammon and return to France (February-May 1889). The government of Indo-China had, in fact, called his attention to a state of affairs which had just been created in Middle Laos by the entry in scene of a Siamese agent, the "Prat Yott," who had moved back the old boundaries indicating the limits between Annam in the strict sense and the principalities of the Mekong and had established himself with an armed force in the cantons of Camkeut and Cammon, which were dependencies of Annam. By its mass deportations Siam had previously emptied this whole region, where its troops had searched vainly in 1828 for the fugitive King Anou (1). Then after the final ruin of Vientiane it had completely

1. See above, p. 172.

lost interest in Cammon, and the "survivors," who were indeed few in number, had asked and obtained the consent of the court of Hue to be attached to the empire.

Vacle and Pavie peacefully went down the /288/ river on a raft, saluting Paklay -- and its dramatic memories -- as they passed, as well as Vientiane, Nongkhay and Outene. Then they went up the Nam-Hin-Boun in a pirogue as far as the rapids of Keng-Kiec "which flow between calcareous upheavals" and penetrated on elephant back into the plateau of Camkeut to reach Vinh and then Hanoi by way /492/ of the ridge of Hatrai.

Upon their arrival in Cammon they were confirmed by the Phou-Thais of the region "in their certitude that the region had always been administered by Annam." Thus Pavie categorically declared to the Siamese Pra Yott whom he found established not far from Nape and who tried to justify both his presence and the moving of the boundaries by imaginary incursions of pirates: "In no way do you have the qualifications necessary to define the frontier. The territory on which we are standing is Annamite. You must expect before very long to see our soldiers here to replace you. I advise you to welcome them with all due respect so that the people may see that our two countries are friendly" (1). Indeed, Captain de

1. Pavie distinguished, or affected to distinguish, between the Siamese government which was "of good faith" and its own overzealous agents.

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133
497
492

from upstream to downstream and vice versa was accomplished by means of oxcarts. In the high water period, however, loaded pirogues ventured to descend the passes. Nowadays the railways offers such advantageous transportation that merchants no longer have any reason to expose their pirogues to the dangers of the Khône passes or to effect a transshipment by means of carts or bearers.

4. The maritime reach from South Khône to the sea.

For a distance of about 200 kilometers, that is to say from South Khône to Kratié (Cambodia), this reach is navigable for steam launches only during the high water period (July to October). It is navigable over a shorter distance, from Khône to Stung-Treng, in all seasons. From Kratié down to the sea steam navigation is possible all year long.

[60] Thus, despite its great rate of flow and the volume of its waters, the Mékong can be negotiated by steam launches only over a small part of its immense course. Here navigation will be interrupted by insurmountable changes in level, there it will be stopped by the rapidity of the current, and elsewhere a lack of water or sand will form an obstacle. In short, the Mékong is a capricious river and has, in addition to a few magnificent reaches where steam navigation is generally easy, rapids which render it dangerous and even impossible.

Under present conditions the Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet [compagnie des Messageries fluviales de Cochinchine] has been able to establish a fairly direct service by steam launch and pirogue from Saigon to Luang-Prabang, over a total distance of 2300 kilometers.

The following table shows the length in kilometers of possible journeys both by steam launch and by pirogue during high and low water periods.

Today Nong-Khay numbers about 10,000 inhabitants and 2000 houses. It is the starting point for the ox-cart caravans which travel to Bangkok by way of Korat carrying all the products of northern Laos. 505 [492]

From Nong-Khay on the Mékong winds through a plain in a northeast direction. Its banks are densely populated and highly fertile. At Pon-Pissay, on the 18th parallel (2), the river makes 505 133

(2) The reader will have noted that the 18th parallel has often been referred to in the foregoing. This stems from the curious fact that, in its meanderings, the great river is theoretically cut seven times by the parallel between Pak-Lay and Saniabouri, that is to say over a distance of 535 kilometers.

another northward bend [85] as far as Keng-Sa-Doc, which is just downstream from Pak-Sane (Patchoum). From this point on the Mékong takes the course which it will keep all the way to the sea, following a line approximately parallel to the Annamitic Chain and to the Gulf of Tonkin.

Somewhat beyond Pon-Pissay the Mékong is joined on its left bank by an important tributary, the Ngûm, a fine river with a peaceful course whose valley is highly populated and gives rise to quite extensive trade. Cinnamon, tobacco and catechu [sisièt] are its chief products. The Ngûm can be navigated by pirogues and rafts in all seasons as far as Tinh-Kéo, where the river is joined by the Nam-Song, about thirty kilometers from Tourakhom. The gunboat Massie went partway up the river during the high water period. It is said that the Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet Company [compagnie des Messageries fluviales de Cochinchine] intends to begin a steam launch service along the river because of its commercial importance.

After the Ngûm on the left bank of the river come first the Nam-Mang, which is of no great interest, and then the Nam-Nhîep, which might be thought larger than it really is, to judge by its mouth. In fact, its total length is scarcely fifty kilometers, and its valley is sparsely populated. Just downstream from the Nam-Nhîep is the mouth of the Nam-Sane, which flows into the river at Muong-Pak-Sane (Patchoum). This river, which has a very winding course, can be navigated by pirogues and rafts in all seasons as far as Keng-Louang, to the north of Borikan. It can be navigated by steam launches over a distance of about fifty kilometers during the high water period.

3. The Inner Reach

505 133 361 438

After being joined by the Moun, the largest tributary on its right bank, the Mékong turns back eastward. As it leaves the narrow gorge of Pak-Moun where its course narrows to as little as 200 meters in width between sheer cliffs, it resumes a general north-northwest and south-southeast direction and spreads out over rich plains as far as the mouth of the Sédone.

Korat (1), the largest market in Siamese Laos, also belongs to the

(1) The Moun passes about 25 kilometers to the southeast of Korat.

Mékong basin through the Ta-Krong. The importance of this center is well-known, and today it is directly connected with Bangkok by a railway. Oubône (2), the other market town which is the storehouse

(2) Korat and Oubône are the seats of two French consulates.

of Lower Laos for Korat and Bangkok, as Nong-Khay is the storehouse of Upper Laos, is situated on the banks of the Moun about 300 kilometers from Korat, and only sixty from the Mékong. Communication between Korat and Oubône is achieved mainly by land, by means of ox-carts. We have seen in the foregoing that [93] steam navigation had been attempted on the Moun during the high water period as early as 1891, and that the Siamese were then planning to send their steamships out on the Mékong in the hope of getting there ahead of us. The launches provide a highly irregular service between Oubône and Tha-Phan-Sang, which is about 25 kilometers downstream from Korat. The trip takes from eight to ten days going upriver, and four to five coming down.

[492]

In its lower course, that is to say between Oubône and Pak-Moun, the Moun is barred near its mouth by shelves which make navigation extremely difficult, even for pirogues, during part of the year. The Chinese merchants of Oubône, however, who go by pirogue to Bassac or out on the Sédone, go up and down the Moun in all seasons. Because of the particular service for which they are used, their pirogues are known by the special name of Hua-Moun, or pirogues of the Moun (1)

(1) See table, Chapter VIII.

231 654 It is much to be desired that the work of our physiologists may finally be successful and place at the disposal of everyone serums which will be capable of fighting the epizootic diseases which are decimating horned animals. In the meantime our administrators can only recommend to the natives a few rules of veterinary hygiene, a feeble protective measure against the epidemic. They should be particularly careful to see that dead carcasses are not thrown into watercourses.

231 492 262 825 Oxen. In Laos, oxen are raised mainly for use in transport or for export as animals for slaughtering. In the far north they are also harnessed to carts.

The Laotians have an instinctive repugnance for beef meat, and eat it only when an animal dies by accident or has to be killed as the result of a wound or broken bone. There are even certain prejudices and certain customs in this matter, which are doubtless vestiges of another age when the ancestors of the present-day inhabitants were pastoral people among whom slaughtering [404] oxen for food was prohibited under penalty of a fine.

231 Whereas the buffalo in Laos are sturdy and of a fine height, the oxen often leave much to be desired. This is due to the fact that the natives raise oxen as they do buffalo, that is to say by leaving it to forage for itself. Although the buffalo, a hardy and autochthonous animal, requires almost no care in breeding, the ox, which is a cross-bred animal, imported and not so tough, requires a great deal of care and management. But when ox raising is treated like buffalo raising, the result is an inferior product and thence a progressive degeneration of the breed.

The Youns, the Lus and the Burmese are the only ones who have a complete mastery of raising oxen as draft and pack animals, and who produce individuals of comparatively tall stature which are sturdy, courageous and resistant to fatigue. They are even able, thanks to suitable treatment and care, to condition and train the often puny specimens which they sometimes go great distances to buy, even into southern Laos.

231 439 The oxen of Song-Khone (1) and of the Kham-Thong-Niai-Saravane region are destined mainly to be sold for meat in Cambodia and in Cochinchina, and this is quite a lucrative trade.

(1) In 1898 the presence of about 1,500 oxen and cattle was reported in this province.

439
489

A) Means of transport used

1. BY LAND. The means of transport used on land routes include men, elephants, horses, mules, oxen and oxcarts.

482 Men. A man serving as a bearer may carry his burden in three different ways, depending on the race to which he belongs and the route he must follow, whether over plains or mountains.

a) On the back. This manner of carrying burdens is used by all mountainfolk in general, Thais, Khas and others. Women and children as well as men carry burdens which are naturally in proportion to their strength. In transports, the average load for one bearer is thirty kilograms.

b) With a bamboo pole, the load being distributed at both ends. Two baskets, two packs or two cases are fastened to the extremities of a light, fairly thick bamboo pole which is about 1.5 meters long. The bearer places the middle of the pole on his shoulder and balances the load with his hand. The weight of the load thus carried will vary between 24 and 30 kilograms. This way of carrying loads is used by the [442] Burmese, the Lus, the Youns, the northern Laotians and some Khas.

c) With a bamboo pole, the load being suspended in the middle. This method of transport requires two men, one at each end of a bamboo pole about two meters long. It is difficult by this means to carry a load greater than 15 to 20 kilograms per man, or 30 to 40 kilograms per pole. This method of transport is used in the plains regions by the Laotians, Thais and other inhabitants of valleys and plateaus. A bearer can cover an average distance of 25 kilometers per day in level country, and from 15 to 20 in mountainous regions.

Carrying loads on one's head, which meets with such favor in Africa, is not a method used in Laos.

492 Elephants. Depending on its age, size and energy, an elephant can carry loads varying between 100 and 190 kilograms. But it is a delicate animal and requires great care and rather frequent rest periods.

On the other hand, it can go anywhere, even in spots where horses and even men would be halted. The elephant's step is regular on uneven terrain as well as in flat regions. The average distance covered in a day is from 18 to 25 kilometers, depending on the nature of the terrain and the temperature.

492

Pack-horses and mules. It is astounding to see the courage, the spirit and the stamina of the horses and mules used for transporting merchandise in the northern part of Laos and in Yunnan. These animals are small in size, undernourished and scarcely given any care, yet they can go on for several months without stopping at all except for two halts every twenty-four hours, one in the middle of the day and the other at night. Depending on their size and training, the net load which they can carry is 80 kilograms for the smaller ones and 90 kilograms for the larger ones, not counting the weight of the saddle and pack-saddle, the harness and the various pieces of equipment belonging to the muleteers.

The average distance covered by pack-horses and mules each day varies from 20 to 28 kilometers, depending on the nature of the terrain. With their incomparable sureness of foot these animals can go anywhere, in the mountains as well as on the plains.

[443] **Pack-oxen.** Oxen are used for carrying loads throughout all of Laos and in other neighboring countries such as Burma, Siam and Cambodia. The loads are made up of two baskets higher than they are wide, traversed by a wooden bar which rests on the pack-saddle on the animal's back. In northern Laos and regions of the same latitude an ox load is about 50 kilograms, while in countries further to the south it may be as little as 35 or even 30 kilograms. [Illustration here]

The oxen of the north are much more robust than those of the south, and they are accustomed to mountain roads. The speed of pack-oxen is very low. The distance covered in an average day, which generally ends at eleven o'clock or noon, varies between 10 and 14 kilometers, depending on whether the animals are going over flat or mountainous ground.

Draft oxen. Oxen are harnessed to carts and wagons which are used in long distance transport and for agricultural transport. The carts are covered with a waterproof roof made of braided rattan and shaped like a tortoise shell. The [444] wagons have high rails and wheels 1.8 meters in diameter, and are not covered.

A cart can carry 300 kilograms and a wagon more than 900.

For agricultural transports, wagons are sometimes harnessed to two buffalo.

Draft-oxen have a considerably higher speed than pack-oxen,

492 and some are even trained to trot. It may be reckoned that the average distance covered daily by a team of two oxen, on flat ground, naturally, is from 15 to 20 kilometers.

501 505 2. BY WATER. Besides the natural method of floating, or of floating improved by bamboo air jackets (used for rough timber), steamships, pirogues and rafts are used in Laos for trips and for transport.

Steamships. The steamships in Laos at present are:

1. The Lagrandière, a 100 metric ton gunboat which is at present immobilized at Xieng-Kok, just above Xieng-Lap.

2. The fleet of the superior residency, including the Argus, the Haiphong and the Ham-Luong.

3. The commercial fleet of the Cochinchina River Merchant Fleet Company [Compagnie des Messageries fluviales de Cochinchine], composed of the following ships: the Trentinian, the Colombert, the Garcerie and the Vien-Tiane, each of 105 tons' burthen, and the Massie of 100 tons (1).

(1) See Appendix XXX.

Pirogues. Pirogues are used for trips and for transporting merchandise, particularly in an upriver direction.

There are pirogues on the Mekong and its chief tributaries which are capable of covering great distances and which vary in size and in tonnage. They are from 10 to 25 meters long and can transport from 1 to 6 tons of merchandise. Depending on their size and the difficulty of the journey, these pirogues are manned by a sufficient number of men, generally varying from four to ten. [445] They are maneuvered by oars and poles going downstream, and by poles and towlines going upstream.

Rafts. There are two kinds of rafts. Some are formed of two pirogues which are joined side by side, covered with a floor and lightened on the sides by packets of bamboo, while the others are composed solely of bundles of bamboo which are solidly joined and then covered with a floor. Both kinds are used going downstream only. The former are dismounted when the journey is over. [Illustration here] The pieces of bamboo are removed, and the disjoined pirogues are ready to go back upstream separately.